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POLAND: Strikes and Demonstrations

*Sporadic strikes and a clash between young people and the police yesterday in Krakow, in southern Poland, marked the beginning of the sixth month of martial law.*

The violence in Krakow erupted when police with clubs, tear gas, and water cannons charged a crowd of about 10,000. The young people had gathered after a mass that has been said on the 13th of every month since the imposition of martial law. Police also broke up a similar but smaller demonstration in Warsaw.

Demonstrations and strikes earlier in the day had been peaceful. [redacted] stated that several thousand Poles gathered at a major intersection in Warsaw but dispersed without incident after the police moved into the area. About 5,000 to 6,000 students at Warsaw University reportedly observed the strike by leaving their classrooms.

Preliminary information indicates that workers staged scattered strikes despite heavy police presence and warnings of severe consequences.

[redacted] confirmed that workers in all departments at a major transportation equipment plant in southeastern Poland struck. [redacted] claim that short strikes occurred in other major cities.

Comment: The worker strikes probably were less widespread than some Solidarity activists had hoped but more extensive than the regime admits. The day's events were, however, a clear demonstration that the population is increasingly willing to challenge the authorities and that Solidarity activists can control some of this sentiment. Tensions remain high, and additional violence in the coming weeks is probable.

The most serious immediate consequences may fall on university students and the Church. If the regime carries out its threat to expel students for demonstrating, to fire the more popular professors, or to close the universities, there will be more clashes. Warnings to the Church not to let itself be exploited will probably become more intense, but--despite pressure from some conservatives--the regime probably is not yet ready to attack the Church more directly.

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